

NIFA in the News – Week of April 2, 2012

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In the News

Novel approach to curing crop diseases tested (PhysOrg 4/3). Sugar may be a treat for humans, but for aphids it can be life threatening. A \$452,000 grant to Cornell and Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research (BTI) will fund research exploiting this vulnerability to control agriculturally important insect pests. The award was granted through the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative of the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. It will fund postdoctoral associates in the Douglas and Jander labs over the next three years. [Link](#)

Researchers fine-tuning organic peanut production (Southwest Farm Press). University of Georgia researchers studying organic peanut production and researchers with the USDA's Agricultural Research Service have found ways to reduce the amount of chemicals used in traditional peanut farming operations. Supported by a series of Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) grants, the critical breakthrough in the overall research effort was a weed control strategy based on intensive cultivation. This includes using the right equipment in conjunction with cultural practices that enhance peanut competition with weeds. The production system — validated on certified organic fields — works, said Carroll Johnson, a USDA-ARS research agronomist with the UGA campus in Tifton. [Link](#)

Pork checkoff investment yields PRRS breakthrough (Minnesota Farm Guide 4/4). Building on work originally funded by the Pork Checkoff, a consortium of scientists from around the country has discovered a genetic marker in pigs that identifies whether or not a pig has a reduced susceptibility to porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS) — a disease that costs the U.S. pork industry an estimated \$664 million per year. The research team that led to this marker discovery includes scientists at USDA's ARS, Kansas State University and Iowa State University. The researchers continue to be funded by the PRRS Host Genetics Consortium, a nationwide effort originally funded by the National Pork Board; the Coordinated Agricultural Project program; the National Institute of Food and

Agriculture and the U.S. Swine Genome Coordinator for the National Animal Genome Research Program. [Link](#)

Breaking the PRRS Code (Pork Magazine 4/4). A consortium of scientists has discovered a genetic marker in pigs that identifies whether or not the animal has a reduced susceptibility to PRRS. The research began with PRRS Host Genetics Consortium, or PHGC, a nationwide effort involving the National Pork Board, USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, the Coordinated Agricultural Project program and the U.S. Swine Genome Coordinator for the National Animal Genome Research Program. Genome Canada, multiple universities and allied industry members also played a role. PHGC initiated the research and provided more than \$5 million to the effort. Rowland is co-director of PHGC as well as director of the USDA-funded PRRS Coordinated Agriculture Project — PRRS CAP — which has been instrumental in funding and advancing numerous PRRS research projects over the years. [Link](#)

4-H Clubs Thrive in Postwar Iraq (Education Week 4/4). About twice a month, thousands of Iraqi teenagers and preteens gather across their country and make a very American pledge to use their heads, hearts, hands, and health for the greater good of their community, their country, and the world. It's the traditional promise of the 110-year-old 4-H Club. Although most American troops have pulled out of Iraq, the 4-H Club remains. The club was imported about three years ago by a U.S. Department of Agriculture employee who was sent to the Middle East to help women develop their dairy-management skills. The organization now counts more than 3,000 Iraqi youths among its members. [Link](#)

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